



## **History of The Hotel Hershey**

In a time when the nation was in the throes of the Great Depression, Milton S. Hershey had a vision. He was determined to build a grand hotel high atop Pat's Hill in the town he had "built on chocolate."

Nearly three decades earlier, Mr. Hershey had perfected his formula for milk chocolate and began his planned community of Hershey, Pennsylvania. By 1930, he had already constructed the chocolate factory, homes for his employees and a school for orphaned boys. Now it was time to resurrect plans from an earlier time.

Mr. Hershey and his wife, Catherine ("Kitty"), had long wanted to build a grand hotel in the style of those they had come to love during their travels abroad. Originally the Hersheys dreamed of recreating a famous Egyptian resort, Cairo's Heliopolis Hotel. In fact, Mr. Hershey went so far as to purchase the architectural plans. But when it was estimated that the cost of duplicating the structure would be \$5 million, he abandoned the idea. Planning for the hotel brought Kitty a great deal of pleasure; however, her death in 1915 put the hotel construction project on the back burner.

More than a decade after Kitty's death – despite the objections of his close friends and the urgings of business associates to conserve his resources – Mr. Hershey announced in 1930 that he intended to build a hotel. He gave his architect, D. Paul Witmer, a postcard of a smaller hotel he and Kitty had enjoyed on the Mediterranean. Witmer took the postcard and began to create the grand lady on the hill known today as **The Hotel Hershey**.

Mr. Hershey's involvement didn't stop there. He and Kitty had kept notes of their travels abroad, and he instructed Witmer to outfit the new hotel with a Spanish patio, tiled floors, a fountain and a grand dining room.

During construction of **The Hotel Hershey**, as many as 600 steelworkers, masons, carpenters, and other craftsmen and laborers were employed on the Hershey payroll. Mr. Hershey knew that if he didn't provide work for the townspeople, he would have to provide for them in other ways.

The workers began building the hotel in 1932, continued through a very mild winter, and completed the project in 1933. A formal opening celebration was held on May 26, 1933, with a dinner and dance for 400 invited guests.

The \$2 million hotel opened for business the next day. Mr. Hershey had finally realized the dream that he and Kitty had shared – and in doing so, he created an elegant jewel nestled in the rolling hills of his birthplace. Shortly after the Hotel opened, renowned world traveler Lowell Thomas described it as “a palace that out-palaces the palaces of the Maharajahs of India.” This testament to the beauty and charm of the resort remains true today.

Though so many features of the Mediterranean-style hotel make it special, one that cannot be denied is the Circular Dining Room. Mr. Hershey didn't want his dining room to have any “bad” seats. He had seen other establishments seat single diners (such as he often was) behind pillars or at tables with obstructed views, and he didn't want that to happen here. So the Circular Dining Room was built in a semi-circle, without pillars or corners, and each guest could view the breathtaking formal gardens just on the far side of the windows.

Today, **The Hotel Hershey** celebrates nearly 75 years of tradition and elegance. From its inception in the 1930s to its more recent renovations, **The Hotel Hershey** has symbolized the luxury and quality known to the finest hotels in the world.